

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-8 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite based on an inconsistent preamble and an unclear structural relationship. Applicants have amended the preamble of the claims and the independent claims and therefore, based on the current amendments, withdrawal of the rejection is in order.

Claims 1, 2-10 and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the prior art container illustrated in figures 1 and 2 of the present application.

Applicants have amended each of the independent claims, namely claim 9 and new claim 13, with support for the amendments being found and supported by pages 16 to 24 of the filed application.

Applicants have canceled claim 1 without prejudice and replaced it with new claim 13 that recites a sealing element which is interposed between an opening face and a door element of a storage container for precision substrates.

A fit-holding portion is formed by notching either a front inner periphery of the opening face of the container main body or an outer peripheral side of the door element. The sealing element includes an endless portion to be fitted into the fit-holding portion and a flexible protruding part projected from the endless portion obliquely and outwardly. The sealing element also includes a plurality of fitting ribs formed on at least one side of the endless portion so as to have a press-contact within the fit-holding portion and projected higher by 1 to 25% than the width of the fit-holding portion.

Applicants respectfully submit that the prior art reference fails to include a sealing element having the claimed plurality of fitting ribs that have the claimed orientation and claimed characteristics.

In contrast to the “protruding part 26” in the prior art Figures 1 and 2, claim 13 recites that when the open front of the container is closed by the door element, and that the flexible protruding part of the sealing element is flexed so that a curved portion of the protruding part comes into contact with the contact surface of the main body or door element. In accordance with the present invention, the protruding part of the sealing element is merely bent in the direction of attachment of the door element instead of being compressed in the direction of the attachment of the door element. In the prior art construction shown in Figures 1 and 2, the protruding part merely compresses in the direction of the attachment of the door element as opposed to the claimed bending action of the protruding part recited in the present claims. This arrangement permits air to be released from the interior of the container main body to the outside when the internal pressure of the container main body becomes higher than the external pressure. Conversely, while the internal pressure of the container main body becomes lower than the external pressure, the outside air is prevented from entering the container main body.

Applicants respectfully submit that this feature is not present in the prior art reference (Figures 1 and 2) since any protruding part of the prior art device merely compresses when the door element is closed as shown in Figure 2.

Based on the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of new claim 13 are respectfully requested at this time.

Claims 3, 5 and 12 should be allowed as depending from what should be an allowed independent claim 13.

Claim 9 has been amended and recites a hermetic container that includes a sealing element. The amendments to claim 9 are identical to or similar to the features recited in new claim 13 and therefore, reconsideration and allowance of amended claim 9 are in order based on the above comments with respect to new claim 13. In particular, the claimed structure of the fitting ribs and the protruding part are neither disclosed nor suggested by the prior art Figures 1 and 2 of the present application.

Based on the above comments, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of claim 9, as amended.

Claims 4, 6 and 10 should be allowed as depending from what should be an allowed independent claim 9, as amended.

In view of the above amendment, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

Dated: January 3, 2007

Respectfully submitted,

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